

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Josh Guo and I am a Yale University student. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

As a college student myself, I am privileged to attend a higher education institution where I have access to meal plans and affordable dining facilities for me to maintain a healthy lifestyle, without any worry of my next meal. Unfortunately, for many students across our state, and a disproportionate amount of black and brown students, they cannot say the same. Access to food is a privilege that many of us take for granted, and never take the time to truly appreciate or consider. It is time for us to level this very basic playing field—in a world where access to quality education is already very inequitable and unbalanced, the least we can do is improve access to a right as basic as food.

In conclusion, I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Josh Guo
New Haven, CT